

STEPPING STONES™

EDUCATORS' GUIDE



TOTALLY TRUE
adventures!



Have you been looking for engaging chapter books that will appeal to young readers and help them build the literacy skills they need? Well, look no further—you've found Stepping Stones! For over twenty-five years, Stepping Stones books have helped millions of kids make the transition from picture books and easy-to-reads to chapter books and independent reading. The reading level of each book is a perfect match for emerging readers, and fun, exciting, charmingly well-written stories encourage reading success and a love of reading.

This Educators' Guide focuses on how to use two of the genres in the Stepping Stones series to enhance reading instruction: **Totally True Adventures** and **History**. Stepping Stones History books introduce young readers to historical fiction with captivating characters, exciting plots, and authentic dialogue. With stories set in a wide range of historical periods, every student can find a Stepping Stones History book that will spark his/her innate curiosity. **Totally True Adventures** introduce students to fascinating people and remarkable events that will generate a lifelong love of nonfiction.



INCLUDES COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS CORRELATIONS AND FOUNTAS & PINNELL GUIDED READING LEVELS



IN THE CLASSROOM



What's in My Head?: Understanding Character

This activity helps students begin to understand how authors reveal character, using appearance, actions, behaviors, thoughts, and dialogue. This activity can be done at any time over the course of the reading and is a great way to check for understanding. On the board, draw an outline of the main character. From the head, draw a series of thought bubbles. Give students an opportunity to offer what they believe the character is *thinking*. Next, draw a large heart inside the figure. Ask students to share what the character is *feeling*. Allow time for them to draw their own figure and write a paragraph to describe the character's thoughts and feelings.

🕒 **Common Core Correlations:** CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.2.1, RL.2.3, RL.2.6–2.7, RL.3.1, RL.3.3

The Plot Thickens: Understanding Narrative Structure

The engaging plotlines in Stepping Stones are highly effective tools for teaching basic narrative structure. To help students understand and internalize the concept of story structure (beginning, middle, end; rising action, climax, resolution), create storyboards as you read the book. At the end of each chapter, discuss the main event(s). Next, give students a blank storyboard template. (The template must contain enough picture boxes to storyboard each chapter in the book.) Instruct students to draw the main event in each chapter. When the storyboards are complete, discuss how the events “build” to the story-changing moment (the climax), and “fall” to the ending/conclusion. For a fun extension of this activity, make a photocopy of each storyboard. Then cut the thumbnails into individual pictures, mix up the order, and place each set of thumbnails in a different envelope. Give each student an envelope and challenge them to put the pictures into the proper story sequence. To extend this activity into the arts, have students choose one thumbnail and create an original painting or drawing based on it. Display the finished work alongside the original storyboard.

🕒 **Common Core Correlations:** CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.2.5, RL.2.7, RL.3.5, RI.3.1, RI.3.7, RF.2.4.A, RF.3.4.A

Words into Pictures: Recognizing Figurative Language

Middle-grade readers are ready to begin grasping the creative power of words. Detailed descriptions and evocative figurative language are found throughout each Stepping Stones book. Introduce the concept of figurative language as a tool that writers use to create pictures in the reader's mind and to describe or express ideas in a unique and creative way. As you read the books, challenge students to identify examples of figurative language, such as this example from *Pioneer Cat*: “. . . Your pa's got itchy feet. He's a traveling man. He'll keep moving west till we run out of land, I reckon” (p. 7); or this passage from *A Time to Be Brave*: “Then we saw them. Hundreds of airplanes, like giant vultures, flying low, blocking out the sun” (p. 20). Discuss these examples as well as others, challenging students to construct meaning. Give students time to illustrate their favorite examples of figurative language.

🕒 **Common Core Correlations:** CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.2.4, RL.3.4, RI.2.4, L.3.5

Word-ly Wise: Vocabulary Acquisition

Before each chapter, preview domain-specific words (low-frequency, specialized vocabulary associated with specific topics or fields of study). Totally True Adventures contain many domain-specific vocabulary words that can be used to increase vocabulary acquisition, such as *papyrus*, *pyramid*, and *archaeologist* in *The Curse of King Tut's Mummy*. As students read aloud and come across domain-specific vocabulary, first challenge them to use context clues to decipher the word meaning. For each word, make a “brick” by writing the word on an index card and placing it at the bottom of a blank classroom wall. Challenge students to see how high they can build their word wall. When the book is done, review each new word. Count the “bricks” and reinforce to students how much their vocabulary has grown!

🕒 **Common Core Correlations:** CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.2.4.A, L.3.4.A, L.3.6

Use the following suggested activities to build literacy skills and to enhance students' reading experiences with

TOTALLY TRUE adventures!

Real People. Real Adventure. Powerful Themes.

How can reading the story of Howard Carter in *The Curse of King Tut's Mummy* teach a child about perseverance? Or reading about the journey of the heroic sled dog who brought desperately needed medicine to a snowed-in town in Balto and the Great Race help a student understand determination? Use stories of the people (and animals) featured in Totally True Adventures to help young readers grasp the concept of theme. Before introducing the book to your students, preview the text by identifying its major themes. (For example, the major themes in *The \$25,000 Flight* are courage, perseverance, and the ability to believe in oneself.) Ask students to offer their ideas about the meanings of the words. Jot down all students' responses. Next, share the word definitions with students, and ask if they can offer an example of each. As students read, encourage them to be "on the lookout" for how the main characters "live" these words by example. Have students place a sticky note on any portion of text that they feel describes the words. For group discussion, students can refer to their examples and describe why they think the action represents a word (theme). After students finish reading the book, have them choose one of the theme words and write a summary about how the main character represents the word/theme.

Common Core Correlations: CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.2.2–2.3, RL.3.2–3.3, RI.2.6

Overcoming Obstacles: Recognizing Conflict/Problem in a Narrative

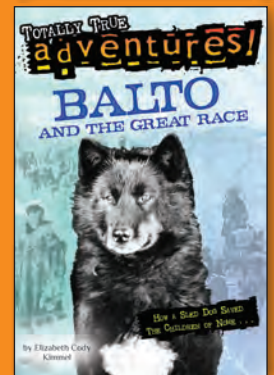
Many of the Totally True Adventures focus on a person or historical event in which a person or group of people are faced with a challenging situation. In *The Curse of King Tut's Mummy*, a story about the man who discovered the famous king's tomb, the reader learns that young Howard Carter was born into a family too poor to send him to college, forcing him to begin work at age fifteen. In *The \$25,000 Flight*, readers climb aboard the *Spirit of St. Louis* with legendary aviator Charles Lindbergh and learn that in addition to courage, his historic flight required hard work and determination. When reading the books with students, explain how every great character, whether real or fictional, has to face and overcome *adversity*. Define the word and ask students to offer synonyms, which may include *difficulty*, *hardship*, or *challenge*. As students read the text, focus on the problems that arise for the character(s) and how he or she is able to overcome them. Have students choose a passage from the book that illustrates a problem/solution. Give students time to illustrate their chosen passage, and have them write a caption below the drawing.

Common Core Correlations: CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.2.3, RL.3.3

Communicating with History: Demonstrating Comprehension

Give students a creative opportunity to express their overall understanding of the story. After students have completed the book, lead them in a discussion about the main events and how the character(s) overcomes a personal challenge or difficulty. For example, in *Balto and the Great Race*, a discussion would center around Balto and how this remarkable dog endured, overcoming great obstacles, to deliver medicine to desperately sick people. Have students generate a list of ideas and post this list prominently in the classroom. As a group, compose a class letter to the story's main character in which students tell the character how they feel about his or her life and accomplishments.

Common Core Correlations: CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.2.2–2.3, RL.3.3





Reading: Literature

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.2.1

Ask and answer such questions as who, what, where, when, why, and how to demonstrate understanding of key details in a text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.2.2

Recount stories, including fables and folktales from diverse cultures, and determine their central message, lesson, or moral.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.2.3

Describe how characters in a story respond to major events and challenges.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.2.4

Describe how words and phrases (e.g., regular beats, alliteration, rhymes, repeated lines) supply rhythm and meaning in a story, poem, or song.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.2.5

Describe the overall structure of a story, including how the beginning introduces the story and the ending concludes the action.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.2.6

Acknowledge differences in points of view of characters, including by speaking in a different voice for each character when reading dialogue aloud.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.2.7

Use information gained from illustrations and words in a print or digital text to demonstrate understanding of its characters, setting, or plot.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.3.2

Recount stories, including fables and folktales from diverse cultures; determine the central message, lesson, or moral and explain how it is conveyed through key details in the text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.3.3

Describe characters in a story (e.g., their traits, motivations, or feelings) and explain how their actions contribute to the sequence of events.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.3.4

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, distinguishing literal from nonliteral language.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.3.5

Refer to parts of stories, dramas, and poems when writing or speaking about a text, using terms such as chapter, scene, and stanza; describe how each successive part builds on earlier sections.

Reading: Informational Text

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.2.4

Determine the meaning of words and phrases in a text relevant to a grade 2 topic or subject area.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.2.6

Identify the main purpose of a text, including what the author wants to answer, explain, or describe.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.3.1

Ask and answer questions to demonstrate understanding of a text, referring explicitly to the text as the basis for the answers.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.3.7

Use information gained from illustrations (e.g., maps, photographs) and the words in a text to demonstrate understanding of the text (e.g., where, when, why, and how key events occur).

Reading: Foundational Skills

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RF.2.4.A

Read grade-level text with purpose and understanding.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RF.3.4.A

Read grade-level text with purpose and understanding.

Language

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.2.4.A

Use sentence-level context as a clue to the meaning of a word or phrase.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.3.4.A

Use sentence-level context as a clue to the meaning of a word or phrase.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.3.5

Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meaning.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.3.6

Acquire and use accurately grade-appropriate conversational, general academic, and domain-specific phrases, including those that signal spatial and temporal relationships (e.g., After dinner that night we went looking for them.).

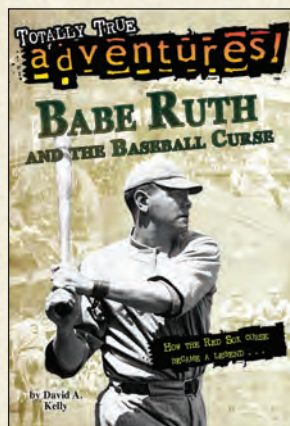
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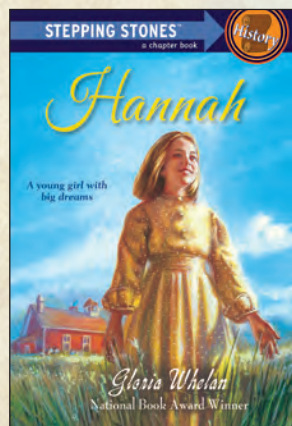


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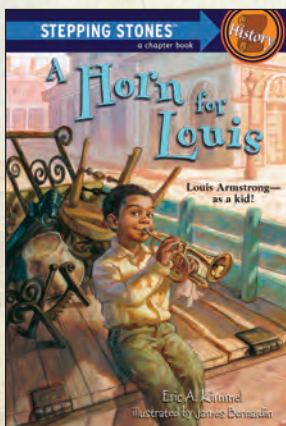
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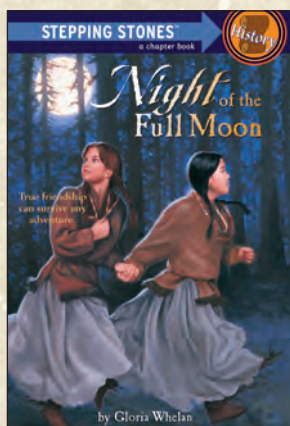
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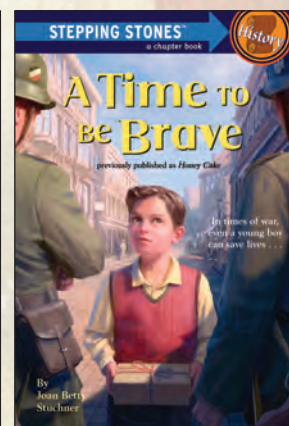
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